

Selected Story.

THE SECOND QUADRILLE.

"Who is that uninteresting Dr. Stein who was introduced to me before? How do you come to this acquisition, Irene?" Baroness Elia asked of Countess Irene Balfur, the young hostess, in the ball room.

"It is very simple," replied the latter.

"Dr. Stein is a mineralogist. He has been stopping down in the village for several days to take advantage of our quarry for the purpose of his researches. Papa became acquainted with him, and in consequence of his usual cordiality he has brought the baser mineral among our set of select precious stones.

"This plebeian pebble, however, seems to consider himself quite on a par with us. He was artless enough to ask me for a dance, the second quadrille—think of it!—to ask me when I promised the last extra a week ago!"

"Well, it seems he was not discouraged by one refusal; I, too, have just declined his invitation for the second quadrille. Besides I did not save the dance to give to this Dr. Stein!"

A bevy of young ladies, all in dainty ball gowns, gathered about Irene and Elia. It transpired, to the amusement of them all, that Dr. Stein had been refused the same second quadrille by each of them.

All declined on the same ground—that they would not squander such a dance on an uninteresting civilian without name or rank.

What a deplorable contrast between his appearance and that of the lieutenants of the cuirassiers and officers of the hussars in the ball-room! It would be ridiculous to dance with such a man!

"I call that loyalty," said Irene. "Bravo! girls! Now my step-sister is the only one left. There she is! Do come here! Did Dr. Stein ask you for the second quadrille? she asked of the young lady approaching."

"Yes, just a moment ago."

"And you gave him the dance?"

"Yes—why shouldn't I?"

"Ah! I thought so. Then let me tell you that you accepted after he had been refused by us all for the same dance."

"So much the better that I still had the quadrille unengaged."

"You are indescribably artless, or at least you pretend to be so."

"If you purposely offended Dr. Stein I am glad that I can make some amends. He is papa's guest and I shall treat him as such." Inez answered calmly and departed.

"See!" said Irene to Elia, "she is just as unbearable all the time, so different from us."

Inez was the daughter of Count Balfur by his first marriage with a woman of limited means. The second time he married a countess of great wealth and the possessor of many estates.

Irene was the only child of the second marriage and the sole heiress of her mother. Inez's prospects of an inheritance from her father were not very brilliant and consequently, at four and twenty, she was still unmarried, in spite of her winning ways and extraordinary amount of common sense, which had soon influenced her to zealous activity.

She was at the head of the large household and took upon herself all the work which her stepmother disdained to do. Besides she found time for deep study and intellectual work. The 18-year-old Irene, a charming, brilliant creature, was the spoiled darling of her mother and of society.

She tyrannized her father and the entire household. The countess had begun to make a match between her and Prince Ysenloh, a distant relative. She did not know him, but was sure that he was extremely wealthy and very peculiar. Instead of enjoying life he was devoting himself to study and to research, seeking his sole recreation in traveling around the world. Upon the advice of the countess he fell in with her plans, since, with his thirty-five years, it was high time to think of marrying, as he wrote to her.

The countess was expecting his arrival at Kumerau castle in the near future with intense interest. She did not doubt that Irene, with her irresistible charms, would soon cure him of his peculiarities and change him to an enjoyable as well as obedient husband.

"Why don't you dance, Dr. Stein?" asked Irene, sarcastically, when she happened to come upon him during an intermission. He had been leaning meditatively in the recess of a window, not taking part in the dance.

"Because I found no partner," he retorted, with a queer smile.

"Too bad! I am afraid you will long for your stones and find life among us unbearable."

She looked down upon him and played with her fan.

"And do you find the life you lead bearable, countess?"

"What a singular question!"

"I should think a person of your talent would not feel satisfied with it. Grace, versatility, elegance and a rare wit are certainly necessary to successfully conduct these dances, hunts, lawn tennis and billiard games, playing charades and singing duets, to arrange social games and theatricals, but no understanding, no intellect, no self-sacrificing activity—nothing of that which makes the true worth of a human being."

"Dr. Stein, not all people are created to dig for minerals, to work leather or to invent machinery. We, too, have our rights. We aristocrats are

the blossoms on the trees of civilization. I grant you that what we are, with our refined taste, our harmonious physical and spiritual culture and our ennobled humanity, we owe to the work of centuries but we are wholly that which the laboring class objects to. We are the result. We are the higher man."

Dr. Stein smiled again.

"Up to this time I have found the higher race of man only in the workshops, there where it is necessary to apply the whole being to attain the goal. There, where it is imperative to overcome all incumbrances, all obstacles and threatening dangers, or to do small labors with patience and self-sacrifice for the benefit of the community, in the spirit of brotherly love or merely for the sake of truth. On a fox-hunt, with oysters and champagne, the higher man has never manifested himself."

"You are partial and you are a democrat," Irene cried, in anger, forgetting herself. Labor belongs to the pleb and the enjoyment of its fruits to the aristocrat. It has ever been thus. One cannot put a noble horse to the plough."

She turned her back on Dr. Stein and joined the ranks of the dancers.

"Are you not dancing, countess?" Dr. Stein asked of Inez, whom he met finally, after a long, vain search among the servants in the dining hall, where she was giving orders and directing the butler as to the wines for the table.

"I must stop at times to look after things," was the friendly reply.

"One cannot always depend upon the servants."

"And do you not shun work?"

"No, indeed, I could not live without it. I am old enough to know the blessings of labor."

It was not long before the young lady and the scientist had entered upon a conversation which involved the deepest and gravest interests of life. The consciousness that they were of sympathetic dispositions, having the same goal, turned away from the trivialities of life, seeking the grand, the good and the true, and accomplishing it with faithful labor, added a great charm to their interchange of ideas.

For the first time in her life Inez felt that she was being understood and appreciated in her best pursuits.

A deeply felt sympathy attracted her to the unassuming man, whose noble, dignified opinions and firmness of character became more evident to her with every word and who with his intellectual superiority, showed so much modesty and liberality of judgment.

They went back to the ball, but always met in the intermission irresistibly drawn to each other, and inexhaustible in their mutual ideas.

"That is just like Inez," said Irene, angrily, to Elia, "to begin a flirtation with Dr. Stein. It is simply shocking!"

It was shortly before the second quadrille that Dr. Stein asked Inez to be his wife. They were both alone in an adjoining apartment, where they had gone to cool off and refresh themselves from the heat of the ball room.

"I hope you will not look upon my proposal as too hasty," he said.

"I know you as if I had always lived with you. For the last week, ever since my arrival at Kumerau, I have taken notice of your doings. I will understand very well, however, that you ask for time to consider, as I am as yet a total stranger to you."

"I need no time to consider," said Inez, with radiant face. "The surroundings among which I have lived up to this time have always remained strange to me, but you seem like an old acquaintance. You are the friend whom I have always sought in vain."

"And you do not object to a plebeian name? Is the rank of a simple scientist not too low for you?"

"No, there is nothing in a name to me; it is simply the bearer I care for," said Inez. Almost speechless with happiness, Dr. Stein clasped the young girl in his arms.

"Beloved," said he, "pardon this little mystification. Dr. Stein is my pseudonym with which I sign my scientific articles for publication. In private life I am Prince Ysenloh. I hope you will not object to that title, either."

Inez looked up in surprise.

"No," she answered "you will always remain the same to me."

In the first joy of their union they overheard footsteps at the door.

"Inez!" Countess Balfur called sharply.

"How can you forget yourself to such an extent! What a scandal!"

"Countess," the Prince quickly interrupted, "you surprised two happy people. We ask your blessing. I have only to state that besides my title as a scientist, under which I live in public, I have also the private name of Ysenloh, with which, I believe the countess is acquainted."

"I may hope you are not averse to union, as you kindly gave your consent to such an arrangement between one of your daughters and myself."

The countess nearly fainted away, but there was nothing to do but to compose herself and to congratulate the happy pair.

"Now we must return quickly to the ballroom so as not to miss the second quadrille," said the prince, after the count, who had been called, had gladly given his paternal blessing.

The count insisted upon accompanying the betrothed couple into the ballroom, there to publicly proclaim the engagement before the beginning of the quadrille. The news flashed like lightning among the dancers, and there was not one among the young ladies who did not secretly rue the fact that she had refused Dr. Stein the second quadrille and who

would not have given up ten years of her life to atone for the error.

Irene was beside herself, and could restrain her self-possession with difficulty as she was doomed to dance opposite the happy pair.

Inez and the prince were so enraptured that they had no thought of either the good will, or jealousy of their neighbors. Their marriage, later, was a happy laboring in common to benefit humanity, to further progress and enlightenment to battle for light and truth.—[Chicago News.

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